

PRESS RELEASE

Local veterans, state disaster recovery team rebuild World War II veteran's home destroyed by fire

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AUSTIN — World War II veteran Raul Vera, 89, will soon have a new home built on the site where lightening burned down his home and took the life of his wife, Martha, thanks to the volunteer efforts of local veterans and the generous donation of time and materials by local contractor J.W. Turner.

Turner, who is working with the state's disaster recovery efforts from hurricanes Ike and Dolly, stepped forward to donate the home and to organize the efforts of electricians, plumbers, framers and other laborers he's worked with rebuilding homes destroyed by the storms in the Rio Grande Valley.

Turner's crews broke ground over the weekend and expect to have the house completed within a month.

"It's great to see a Texas company step up to support our veterans," said Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson, who oversees the state's disaster recovery efforts. "We all owe Mr. Vera a debt for his service to our nation and Mercedes businesses and the veterans' community have really stood up to repay that debt with their good deeds."

Vera's home caught fire June 7. Since then, veterans' organizations in Mercedes including America's Last Patrol have stepped in to help clear the lot and provide Vera the help they can. But the cost of building a new home for Vera proved to be a high hurdle. That's where Turner, working with the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council and the Texas General Land Office, stepped up.

"We've been building homes for those who lost them in hurricane Ike and Dolly, and I've built up a network of contractors I've worked with who I knew would be willing to step up and help," Turner said. "I'm not surprised at all how many folks have been willing to step up to help. That's just how this community is — we all stick together."

The following local businesses have donated their services in the rebuilding: El Clavo Lumber, J3III Concrete, Marco Retiz Electric, Nayal Pruneda Concrete, Cesar Villareal Plumbing, Emilio Salas Framing, Pilos AC, Sherwin Williams, Conklin Cabinets, Pro Finish Interiors.

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